



**SEIUHealthcare.**  
United for Quality Care

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Before the Aging Committee

**In Support of HB 5194 AN ACT CONCERNING REGISTRATION OF TEMPORARY NURSING SERVICES AGENCIES.**

Good Afternoon Senator Miller, Representative Garibay, and members of the Committee. My name is Jesse Martin and I am a Vice President of the Service Employees International Union District 1199NE, and lead our Nursing Home division. District 1199NE represents 26,000 healthcare workers in the state, including 7,000 nursing home workers. I come before you today in support of HB 5194.

This bill would serve as an important step towards addressing the staffing crisis in nursing homes by regulating staffing agencies, who have perpetuated this crisis through their predatory practices. The creation of a staffing agency registry and the requirement that staffing agencies begin to conduct annual reporting, will provide transparency to an industry that has largely operated without oversight.

Nursing homes have contended with chronic understaffing for years, long before the pandemic. However, COVID-19 greatly enhanced the severity of this crisis, leaving many nursing homes scrambling to staff their units. Staffing agencies have seized upon the suffering of our state and the misfortune of nursing homes in order to turn a profit.

Staffing agencies regularly force nursing homes to bid for nursing personnel, contracting with the highest bidder. Even then, we hear reports that contracted staffing agency staff do not show up for their shifts or show up hours late. Furthermore, staffing agencies charge absurd rates for nursing staff, passing along only a small fraction of this rate to the nurses they contract out. Nursing homes struggle to attract new staff, as they cannot compete with the wages offered by staffing agencies. This is deceptive, however, because staffing agency staff are not employees of these agencies and so do not receive the benefits or stability afforded to permanent staff in a nursing home. Ultimately, staffing agencies perpetuate the staffing crisis by absorbing nursing personnel that would otherwise be working in full-time positions in nursing homes, and charge those nursing homes two or three times what those homes would be paying those staff to contract them out.

Our concerns with staffing agencies are not limited to the rates they charge for their staff or the minimal percentage of that rate that ends up in the workers pocket. Staffing agencies are not regulated in the ways nursing homes are, which impacts the quality of care residents receive as well as the state's ability to create long term plans for the administration of these services. Due to nursing home regulations, any staff hired to work in a nursing home must go through extensive vetting to verify that they are qualified to work in a nursing home. Additionally, nursing homes must report to the state a list of their licensed staff, ensuring the state is aware of who is working these facilities. These same expectations do not exist for staffing agencies. While there are undoubtedly quality nurses working for these agencies, nursing home residents deserve to know who is caring for them and to have the peace of mind that they are qualified.

Additionally, through annual cost reporting the state is able to assess the financial well

being of a nursing home, and determine if they are appropriately using the funding they receive from the state, which is often medicaid funding. Again, this same expectation does not exist for staffing agencies. As more nursing homes turn to staffing agencies to address their staffing needs, how is Connecticut supposed to create accurate plans for long-term care services in Connecticut if we do not know how these agencies are spending the money they are receiving? Connecticut and nursing home operators alike will be able to better plan for the future if they can accurately assess the cost of labor in this field.

This bill would go a long way in addressing the issues I have just discussed. A staffing agency registry and the accompanying reporting standards, would allow Connecticut to truly understand who are operating these agencies, who are working for these agencies, and what they are doing with the medicaid dollars they are taking from nursing homes. Other states, such as Minnesota, have already established a registry for staffing agencies. In fact, Minnesota even went a step further, and created a cap on staffing agency rates so they could not price gouge in the midst of a pandemic. This is an additional provision we would welcome in HB 5194.

I applaud the committee for raising this important bill and I urge you to pass it. Thank you for your time.